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UNCLAS DJIBOUTI 000959

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: UNHCR CONCERNED ABOUT REVOKED ASYLUM STATUS
FOR REFUGEES FROM ERITREA AND ETHIOPIA

1. (U) Summary. On September 20 UNHCR Country Representative met with Ambassador and ConOff to raise concerns about refugees in Djibouti. September 14 refugees in the transit camp of Aour Aoussa were alleged that they had 36 hours to leave. UNHCR was most concerned about Erit Ethiopian refugees whose asylum status was suddenly being revoked and support in opposing Djibouti's decision. End Summary.

2. (U) UNHCR Country Representative Collins Asare, accompanied by a representative of the World Food Program, met with Ambassador and Con ask for USG support in opposing the decision of the Government of Djibouti (GoD) to revoke the asylum status for 74 Eritreans and 109 Ethiopians Djibouti. Fifty-one Ethiopians who were given asylum status by UNHCR allowed to stay. But those that had been granted status by the GoD i the status revoked and were asked to leave.

3. (U) Asare conceded that 80% of the individuals in the camp, mostly Somali origin, should be resettled. He said UNHCR believes that the self-proclaimed refugees are actually Djiboutians, or ethnic Somali stable areas. UNHCR has been repatriating thousands of Somalis to no Somalia over the past two years.

4. (U) Asare's concern focused on the GoD's revocation of the refugee without warning and without consultation with UNHCR. According to As U.N. ordinance number 77053/P.R/A.E. dictates that the GoD is obliged consult UNHCR before taking such an action except in urgent cases of security.

5. (U) Asare asked for U.S. support to oppose the action of the GoD. that we pressure the government to allow the refugees to stay longer situation in their countries stabilizes. Alternatively, he suggested simply ask the GoD to include UNHCR in the decisions regarding refugee indicated that he would also approach the French Embassy with the same

6. (U) Ambassador listened but declined to commit to such action given interest in early repatriation of many of the Aour Aoussa refugees who established as economic migrants vice refugees from conflict. She as however, if any specific action had been taken by the Government of Djibouti to enforce the directive that Aour Aoussa refugees depart. Asare responded although the refugees were told they had 36 hours to leave, no action taken yet to remove them. Also, no specifics were given about what might happen if they did not leave. It is not clear if they will be allowed one of the other refugee camps after Aour Aoussa closes, or allowed to enter into Djibouti. Embassy will track developments on this issue and provide reporting and commentary.

RAGSDALE